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Maryland Port Administration still hopeful for Sparrows Point dredging site



Photo by Port of Oakland

The Maryland Port Administration continues to search for a dredging location.

Despite seeing their offer to buy the 300-acre Coke Point peninsula in Sparrows Point rejected, the **Maryland Port Administration** says it is not exploring backup options to the site.

The Port Administration made an offer in late February to Environmental Liability Transfer Inc. to buy the Coke Point peninsula at the former Sparrows Point steel mill, said Richard Scher, a spokesman for the Maryland Port Administration. ELT rejected that offer last week, but the port is still in negotiations with ELT and still hopes to use Coke Point for storing land dredged from the Patapsco River in order to deepen shipping channels. It would then convert Coke Point into a “state of the art marine terminal” in 15 to 20 years, Scher said.

The port has long coveted using Coke Point as a dredged material facility. The peninsula is currently not in use and would replace the Hart-Miller Island dredging facility, which closed in 2009.

ELT completed their purchase of the Sparrows Point steel mill and the 300-acre peninsula with Hilco SP LLC for \$72 million in September. In a letter last week to the port administration, the St. Louis-based company said “they were not in favor of the MPA’s plan to go forward with a dredged material containment facility,” Scher said. He declined to disclose the Port’s financial offer for Coke Point.

The two parties have scheduled a meeting next week to continue to discuss Coke Point, he said.

In the meantime, port officials will not turn to backup plans for a dredged material facility, Scher said.

“I don’t think we’re at that point yet,” he said. “Obviously we’ve been having some difficulty communicating with ELT and getting some responses from them. The fact that we did receive some kind of a letter last week does give us a clear picture of where they are right now.”

James J. White, executive director of the Maryland Port Administration, identified in October the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility in northeast Anne Arundel County as an alternative dredged material facility. But Scher said the agency is not turning to its backup plan yet.

The Port could also expand its pilot program to reuse dredged material, White said in October.

Coke Point would not only help with future dredging, but it could also help create thousands of jobs down the line, Scher said.

“When you talk about a state of the art marine terminal, you’re talking about major job generators,” Scher said.